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SUBJECT: ELECTION EVE: SARKOZY EXTENDS HIS LEAD GOING INTO
SECOND-ROUND FINAL MAY 6

REF: A. (A) PARIS 1611 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. (B) EMBASSY PARIS DAILY SIPRNET REPORT FOR MAY 4
[1](#)C. 2007 AND PREVIOUS

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (U) On the eve of the run-off election between former Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy and Poitou-Charentes Region President Segolene Royal, France's electorate is looking forward -- though not without some apprehension -- to the choice of direction for France that it will make in electing a new president. In the campaign's final 48 hours there is a gathering sense that the French are accepting that Nicolas Sarkozy will be their next president. The public's reaction to the widely watched televised debate May 2 between Sarkozy and Royal has bolstered Sarkozy's position as the front-runner. In the most recent polls of France's 6 major polling organizations, Sarkozy leads with between 54.5 and 52 percent of the vote; Royal trails with between 45.5 and 48 percent of the vote. All of the factors that might upset this expected result are trending Sarkozy's way. End Summary.

EXITED, AND FEARFUL, AT THE PROSPECT OF CHANGE

[1](#)2. (U) There is a palpable sense of expectation -- but also some apprehension -- across France as a highly motivated electorate readies to choose France's president for the next five years on May 6. Opinion surveys show that some 90 percent of the French are interested in the election and attentive to how the result might affect their lives. The heady prospect of imminent change, which most in France admit is long overdue, is tempered by anxiety among many about what a new direction in social and economic policy might mean for their lives.

TWO VISIONS OF HOW TO LEAD CHANGE

[1](#)3. (U) The choice between Sarkozy and Royal is one between two conceptions of how to devise policies for change and implement them. Throughout the campaign, Segolene Royal has presented herself as the candidate of change through "participatory democracy." She has promised continuous dialog with citizens and representative organizations, promised a referendum on far-reaching constitutional reforms, and vowed continuous accountability in her exercise of power. She has highlighted that she is "a mother who has raised four children," who understands the trials of ordinary

people's lives, and will bring a "just order" to French society. "Change without brutality" is Royal's way of characterizing her vision for change through inclusive negotiation with all stakeholders.

¶4. (U) Nicolas Sarkozy has stressed his "passion for action" and underlined the importance of not "disappointing the people again" by failing to keep campaign promises. Sarkozy has laid out a far-reaching reform program, replete with specific policy proposals, often with timelines for achieving promised results. In essence, Sarkozy is asking the voters for a mandate to implement reforms he has laid out in advance. Sarkozy has regularly contrasted his "politics of results" with Royal's "politics of immobilism."

SARKOZY WINS DEBATE THAT

HIGHLIGHTED THIS DIFFERENCE

¶5. (U) The May 2 face-to-face debate between Sarkozy and Royal was seen by over 20 million people in France, essentially half the country's registered voters. The debate starkly exhibited the differences between the two candidates.

Royal called for a "society of solidarity," that would unleash the ingenuity and energy of the French, as all advanced together, inclusively countering the effects of competition and inequality. Sarkozy argued for the reasonableness of his proposals, given the means at the government's disposal for tackling problems, and stressed his commitment to implementing his specific proposals if elected.

The public's verdict is that Sarkozy won, projecting more credibility on the key issues of law-and-order, control of immigration and management of the economy, as well projecting the more confidence-inspiring, "presidential" figure.

SARKOZY WIDENS HIS LEAD

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¶6. (U) Sarkozy has led in all polls of second-round voter intentions since the campaign began in January. In four polls taken by major polling firms after May 2's debate, Sarkozy has widened his lead over Royal compared to these same firms' soundings of the week before. These are among the last polls that will be published before the "official" campaign ends at midnight Friday, May 4. The polls published by France's mainline polling organizations just before the first-round of the election two weeks ago proved very accurate.

¶7. (U) According to the IPSOS polling organization, Sarkozy now enjoys a 54 to 46 percent advantage over Royal in second round voter intentions (respectively, up half a point for Sarkozy compared to the IPSOS poll of a week ago). SOFRES reports Sarkozy with a 54.5 percent lead over Royal, 45.5 percent (the prior SOFRES poll showed Sarkozy's lead at 52.0 percent). The latest CSA survey shows Sarkozy with a 53 to 47 percent advantage (compared to this survey's prior sounding of 52 to 48 percent). Finally the LH2 polling organization's survey shows Sarkozy winning by a 54 to 46 percent margin (up yet again for Sarkozy from the prior LH2 poll's 52 percent figure). Those who believe in polls have little doubt about the outcome of this election.

¶8. (U) On May 4, the campaign's last day, Royal for the first time called Sarkozy "dangerous," charging that France risked social violence if he is elected. Royal's resort to the fear factor can be seen as a desperate attempt to spark a last-minute reversal of fortune.

RESULTS ANNOUNCED AT 8 P.M. PARIS TIME MAY 6

¶9. (U) At 8 P.M. Paris time on the evening of May 6, immediately after all polls close, mainstream media will disseminate the first estimate of the election results. This unofficial result is normally very accurate, except in the

case of a close race. The Interior Ministry is expected to begin posting the official local results on its website at about 9 P.M. All results are expected to have been tallied and posted by 3 A.M. the next morning. The Interior Ministry will also disseminate, soon after 8 P.M., a tally of results from a group of selected polling places that model the electorate at large. The Interior Ministry's website address is: <http://www.interieur.gouv.fr>. Please visit Paris' Classified Website at: <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

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